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Message Text

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15
ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-03 L-02 H-01 RSC-01 /014 W
---------- 049596
R 141320Z JAN 75
FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6829

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CASC MA (REPPAS, GEORGE)
SUBJECT: W/W: GEORGE REPPAS

REF: A. STATE 003749; B. TANANARIVE 0016; C. TANANARIVE 0006

SUMMARY: EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT GOMR SHOULD NOT BE PRESSED FURTHER ON AMBASSADOR'S APPROACH TO GENERAL RAMANANTSOA, SUPREME COURT HEARING NOW EXPECTED END OF JANUARY. EMBASSY BELIEVES GOMR PREPARED TO DISREGARD REPPAS "ESCAPE" ATTEMPT. REPPAS, HOWEVER, REMAINS INTRIGUED BY "ASYLUM" AT EMBASSY AS TEMPORARY RELIEF FROM PRISON REGIME - THIS NOTION SHOULD BE SQUELCHED. END SUMMARY.

1. CONSULAR OFFICER MET WITH REPPAS JAN 7. PRISONER SPOKE AGAIN ON SUBJECT ON POSSIBLE ASYLUM IN EMBASSY. CONSULAR OFFICER REMINDED REPPAS THAT IN SUCH CASES DECISION WOULD BE MADE IN WASHINGTON AND POSSIBILITY EXISTED THAT HE WOULD BE RETURNED TO MALAGASY AUTHORITIES. REPPAS ASKED HOW LONG IT WOULD TAKE DEPARTMENT TO DECIDE. CONSULAR OFFICER REILIED THAT HE HAD NO IDEA, BUT ASSUMED THAT IT WOULD BE DONE QUICKLY.

2. REPPAS ASKED IF HE COULD BE PUT UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN EMBASSY WITH GOMR PERMISSION. CONSULAR OFFICER RESPONDED THAT SUCH THINKING UNREALISTIC. NEVERTHELESS, EMBASSY RECEIVED LETTER FROM REPPAS JAN 9 ASKING THAT AMBASSADOR SEE GENERAL RAMANANTSOA TO REQUEST HIS TRANSFER TO EMBASSY. SUBSTANCE OF TEXT OF LETTER WAS THAT
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AMBASSADOR SHOULD GIVE GOMR TWO CHOICES: RELEASE OR HOUSE

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ARREST IN EMBASSY. HE SAID THAT IN APPROACH TO GENERAL AMBASSADOR SHOULD EMPHASIZE HIS RECENT ESCAPE ATTEMPT AND SAY THAT UNDER STRAIN OF TWO YEARS IMPRISONMENT REPPAS MIGHT ATTEMPT THIS AGAIN AND COULD BE SHOT CAUSING A MAJOR INCIDENT, LEADING TO POSSIBLE BREAK IN RELATIONS. "A CHANGE OF DETENTION STATUS UNDER THE EMBASSY'S SURVEILLANCE AOULD BE OF GREATER ASSURANCE AGAINST MISHAP" REPPAS CONCLUDES IN HIS LETTER.

3. REPPAS LAWYER LEBEL TOLD EMBASSY JAN 10 THAT HE HAD RECEIVED NOTICE FROM SUPREME COURT INDICATING THAT APPEAL BEFORE SUPREME COURT WOULD TAKE PLACE THIS MONTH. LEBEL THOUGHT THAT JAN 28 NOW PROBABLE DATE. LEBEL HAD ALSO

RECEIVED COPY JAN 9 LETTER FROM REPPAS TO EMBASSY REFERRING TO AMBASSADOR'S "COMING AUDIENCE WITH THE GENERAL." LEBEL INFORMED EMBASSY THAT HE DID NOT FEEL THAT APPROACH TO GENERAL WOULD BE APPROPRIATE DURING APPEAL AND COULD HAVE NEGATIVE EFFECT ON PROCEEDINGS.

4. RE QUESTIONS RAISED PARA 3 REFTEL, EMBASSY CAN ASSUME THAT FRUSTRATION OVER LOSS OF AGM AIRPLALE PROBABLY LED TO INCREASED HARASSMENT. FACT THAT REPPAS HAD FUNDS TO PAY ANOTHER INMATE TO CLEAN CELL, DISHES, ETC. ALSO PROBABLY SOURCE OF RESENTMENT BY PRISON STAFF AND OTHER INMATES.

5. EMBASSY HAS MADE NO OFFICIAL REFERENCE TO REPPAS "ESCAPE" ATTEMPT TO GOMR. GIVEN FACT THAT PRISON AUTHORITIES DID NOT TAKE ANY IMMEDIATE ACTION AGAINST REPPAS (REFTEL C), EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE IT WILL BE HELD AGAINST HIM LATER.

6. IN LIGHT OF ANTICIPATED SUPREME COURT HEARING IN NEAR FUTURE AND RECENT COMMENTS BY DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR (REFTEL B) EMBASSY BELIEVES NEXT APPROACH TO GOMR SHOULD BE MADE AFTER APRIL 30 WHEN REPPAS HAS SERVED HALF OF HIS SENTENCE. SEEMS BETTER NOT TO PRESS GOMR TO GIVE FORMAL ANSWER AT THIS TIME TO LAST APPROACH TO GENERAL SINCE ALL INDICATIONS ARE IT WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE NEGATIVE IF GIVEN PRIOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO REPPAS' COMPLETION ON HALF HIS SENTENCE.

7. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT REPPAS SHOULD BE TOLD NOW, IN EXPLICIT TERMS, THAT ASYLUM CANNOT BE GRANTED EXCEPT IN MOST EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES INVOLVING THREAT TO LIFE. EMBASSY ALSO BELIEVES IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF DEPARTMENT WOULD PROVIDE PRECISE LANGUAGE OF STATEMENT ON ASYLUM TO PASS TO REPPAS AND FOR EMBASSY TO INFORM HIM OF SOURCE

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OF STATEMENT. WE BELIEVE REPPAS MIGHT ATTEMPT TO COME
TO EMBASSY TO SEEK "ASYLUM" SIMPLY TO GET RELIEF FROM
PRISON REGIME FOR FEW DAYS WHILE DEPARTMENT REVIEWS CASE.
SUCH AN EFFORT, WE BELIEVE, WOULD NOT AID HIS CAUSE WITH
GOMR AND
IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO KEEP OUT ON PRESS.

8. WITH DEPARTMENT'S CONCURRENCE, EMBASSY IS WILLING TO
SUGGEST TO REPPAS AND GOMR WEEKLY MEDICAL CHECK AT EMBASSY
BY EMBASSY NURSE WHICH COULD INCLUDE HOT SHOWER. SUCH
ARRANGEMENTS, WE UNDERSTAND, HAVE BEEN MADE BY AMERICAN EMBASSIES
WITH OTHER COUNTRIES AND WOULD SERVE TO BOLSTER REPPAS' MORALE.

9. ACTION REQUESTED OF DEPARTMENT:

A. STATEMENT ON ASYLUM TO FURNISH TO REPPAS.

B. DEPT'S VIEWS ON WEEKLY VISIT TO EMBASSY BY REPPAS.
MENDENHALL

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